



My Guru's Quest for a Cruelty Free System of Raising Children

IN THE MID-1990S, MY GURUDEVA, SATGURU SIVAYA SUBRAMUNIYASWAMI (1927-2001), founder of HINDUISM TODAY, had a startling and discouraging revelation. He learned from several youth among his international Hindu congregation that many of his family devotees were using corporal punishment to correct their children. Shocked that parents supposedly on the spiritual path would follow this common worldly pattern, he immediately set about to catalyze a change.

He devoted the July, 1998, edition of HINDUISM TODAY to disclosing the devastating, global phenomenon of corporal punishment of children. Corporal punishment in this context means slapping, spanking, pinching or hitting a child as a means of discipline at home or in school, either with the hand, a cane, a belt or a hard object. Such punishment-based discipline also includes other forms of physical distress, as well as emotional battering.

Julie Rajan, the primary author of that issue's feature story, "Sparing the Child, Should Corporal Punishment End?" noted, "Though they don't say much about it, young Hindu adults today feel deep resentment and anger at having been beaten as children. We struggle with feelings of low self-esteem and failure. Many of us will continue the cycle of violence by beating our own children, or our spouses, simply because we are unable to resolve those feelings. We don't blame our parents, who genuinely loved us and sacrificed for us, for they are themselves just the previous round in this same cycle. We don't blame our Hindu faith either, for corporal punishment of children is present in every culture. But as advocates of nonviolence, we do claim a special role in solving this problem."

Gurudeva was eager to find a way to help Hindu families break the vicious cycle and learn to raise their children without harming them. He realized that many parents who mistreat their children would like to change their ways, but don't know how. Dealing with misbehavior without inflicting punishment, blame and shame sounds good, but how do you do it in the face of a screaming child in the middle of a supermarket? Is there a system that can be learned and followed? Are there teachers who provide such training?

Thankfully, Gurudeva discovered the work of Dr. Jane Nelsen, founder of a successful system called Positive Discipline. Jane teaches that children should be raised with encouragement, love and respect rather than blame, shame and pain. Here, Gurudeva discovered, was a person who had made nonviolent child-rearing her life's mission. And, she had developed a system with a proven track record. After meeting Jane at his monastery, Gurudeva established a new pattern in his

congregation: having parents not only study her books but also teach Positive Discipline classes in their local communities to other parents and teachers who struggle with the same issues.

We are deeply grateful to Dr. Nelsen for giving her wholehearted support to the use of her materials in this Educational Insight. The following pages provide a humble introduction to her thoroughgoing series, which includes *Positive Discipline*, *Positive Discipline for Preschoolers*, *Positive Discipline for Teenagers* and *Positive Discipline A-Z*. She has more recently added a new and profoundly relevant book on children's screen addiction, which will be fully presented in a future edition of HINDUISM TODAY. Visit www.positivediscipline.com for the full array of her resources. Yes, parenting is an adventure, with constant learning all along the way. Jane says that her considerable formal education is secondary to the education and experience she achieved from her successes and failures as a mother of seven children and grandmother to 20.

We hope this Insight will inspire readers to delve into a full study and adoption of Positive



By listening we give children a sense of belonging and acceptance, as this little girl found out while sharing her business plan with Gurudeva

Discipline to help children in your family and community to develop self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation and problem-solving skills.

Gurudeva spoke of the spiritual dimension of childrearing: "The whole world is reevaluating how we treat women, children, the aged and infirm. Ways of behaving toward our fellow human beings that were normal and acceptable one hundred years ago are no longer acceptable. We now comprehend, as never before, the tragedy of a battered wife or an abused or neglected infant. Shamefully, we do not always live up to the Hindu ideal in these areas.

"What is that ideal? It is this: Never injure others. Hindu children are always treated with great respect and awe, for one does not always know who they are. They may be incarnations of a grandmother, grandfather, aunt or uncle, dearly beloved mother, sister, brother, respected father, a yogi or rishi returned to flesh to help humankind spiritually. As parents and teachers, we must ask, 'Who are these souls? What is their destiny to fulfill in this life? How can I help?' Parents love their children, or at least they should, and the principles of ahimsa—nonviolence and nonhurtfulness, physically, mentally or emotionally—do apply in the parent-child relationship."

Bodhinatha Tejlanowami

EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

PARENTING WITH LOVE

An Introduction to "Positive Discipline," with 14 Proven Strategies for Raising Children without Blame, Shame or Pain

Positive Discipline

On the following pages, one of the world's foremost experts on child-rearing presents a practical and compassionate system of guiding children, complete with situational techniques and secrets that society should teach every parent. Drawn from Dr. Nelsen's books, the upper portion of these pages presents some key ideas of her system, and the lower portion presents fourteen strategies. Many of the stories in this Insight were contributed by Kavita Mardemotoo of Mauritius, a parent and avid teacher of Positive Discipline.



BY DR. JANE NELSEN

WHERE DID WE EVER GET THE CRAZY IDEA THAT CHILDREN will do better if we first make them feel worse? Please absorb that statement. It doesn't make any sense at all—yet it is the basis for punishment.

Think of the last time someone put you down, humiliated you and made you feel bad. Did you feel motivated to do better? Did you think, "This is so helpful. I can hardly wait to bring all my problems to this person. She is so encouraging?" Or, did you feel like rebelling, getting even or giving up? One of the latter is what most children do. I call this the Three R's of Punishment: 1) Rebellion, 2) Revenge, 3) Retreat, which comes in two forms: a) Low self-esteem: "I really am a

bad person and need to please others to get love." b) Sneaky: "I just won't get caught next time."

Most parents don't think about the long-term effects of punishment. They don't realize that punishment may stop bad behavior for the moment but may result in future rebellion, revenge or sneakiness. Even when a child becomes obedient, it may be because she has decided (at a subconscious level), "I'm not good enough. Maybe if I obey I will be loved." This can have disastrous results in the future when this same child decides to do whatever her peers want her to do so she will be accepted. When all their intelligence and energy is directed toward proving themselves to others, rebelling or giving up, children do not develop the perceptions and skills needed to become fully competent and capable people.

Punishment is designed to make children pay for what they have done. Positive Discipline is designed to help children learn from what they have done in a safe and encouraging environment. We follow the Five Criteria for Effective Discipline: 1) Does it help children feel a sense of connection (belonging and significance)? 2) Is it respectful and encouraging (kind and firm at the same time)? 3) Is it effective long-term? (Punishment works in the short term, but has negative long-term results.) 4) Does it teach valuable social and life skills for good character (respect, concern for others, problem-solving and cooperation)? 5) Does it help children develop the belief that they are

capable?

It is important to emphasize that eliminating punishment does not mean children should be allowed to do whatever they want. We need to provide opportunities for them to experience responsibility in direct relationship to the privileges they enjoy. Most parents are afraid that if they stop punishing, permissiveness is the only alternative. Permissiveness doesn't meet any of the five criteria. Permissiveness teaches children to believe that love means giving in, and that the world should bow to their every wish. The Positive Discipline books offer hundreds of alternatives for discipline that are nonpunitive and not permissive—and that meet all of the Five Criteria for Effective Discipline. This Insight presents many of those alternatives.

SWAMI BRAHMAVIDYANANDA: "Hindu culture is kindness. It teaches ahimsa, noninjury, physically, mentally and emotionally. It preaches against *himsa*, hurtfulness. My experience taught me that. I grew up in a simple, humble family in India. My father followed Hindu principles strictly. He was closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi, who always taught against violence. My parents never used harsh words or corporal punishment with me or my brothers, not even when we made mistakes. Rather, they guided us by communicating verbally."

Love and Joy in Homes & Classrooms

The primary goal of Positive Discipline is to enable both adults and children to experience more joy, harmony, cooperation, shared responsibility, mutual respect and love in their life and

relationships—in other words, more connection. We often act as though we have forgotten that sharing love and joy is the whole point of living and working with children, and find ourselves acting out of fear, judgment, expectations, blame, disappointment and anger. Then we wonder why we feel so miserable. The following are some basic concepts that show us how to avoid the detours that keep us from experiencing love and joy and satisfaction in our relationships with children.

Children Are Social Beings

Children make decisions about themselves and how to behave based on how they see themselves in relationship to others and how they think others feel about them. Children are constantly making decisions and forming beliefs about themselves, about the world, and about what they need to do to survive or thrive. When they are in their "survival" mode (trying to figure out how to feel a sense of belonging and significance), adults often interpret this as misbehavior. Does misbehavior seem different to you when you think of it as "survival mode" behavior? When they are "thriving," they are developing strength in the Significant Seven Perceptions and Skills. These are:

1. Strong perceptions of personal capabilities: "I am capable."
2. Strong perceptions of significance in primary relationships: "I contribute in meaningful ways and I am genuinely needed."
3. Strong perceptions of personal power or influence over life: "I can influence what happens to me."
4. Strong intrapersonal skills: the ability to understand

RAISING CHILDREN: 14 STRATEGIES PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

1. Parents: Look for Improvement, Not Perfection

Let's face it, perfection is an unrealistic expectation, and children would rather not try at all than experience constant discouragement because they don't live up to an adult's expectation of perfection—or their own. Recognition of improvement is encouraging and inspires children to continue their efforts.

A Story from Jane Nelsen: Mrs. Goel's son Arjuna was getting into trouble at school. His teacher was punishing him by having him write fifty sentences every time he misbehaved by talking or being disruptive. Arjuna would refuse to do the sentences—so his teacher would double the number. Mrs. Goel started lecturing and scolding him. Arjuna rebelled further by acting like he didn't care, and that he hated school.

Finally, during a parent-teacher conference, Mrs. Goel asked what percentage of Arjuna's behavior was "bad." The teacher answered, "About fifteen percent." She was amazed to realize the negative reputation Arjuna was getting (and living up to) because more attention was being paid to his 15 percent misbehavior than to his 85 percent good behavior.

During another conference, with Arjuna present, they all agreed that every time he was disruptive or disrespectful in class, he



DEPOSITPHOTOS/ RAJABENOI@GMAIL.COM

Guided by Positive Discipline, this young girl is developing healthy self-esteem, competence, significance, self-control, inner security and problem-solving skills that will be the foundation for fulfilling her dharma and facing her karma all through life

would make up for it by doing something to contribute, such as doing tasks for the teacher or tutoring another student who needed help. Arjuna's misbehavior was thus redirected into contributing behavior, and he had very few classroom problems after that.

Working for improvement, instead of

expecting perfection, this teacher began having class meetings so problems that did occur were solved by the class as a whole. He learned that it is encouraging to children and to parents when we focus our attention on the positive rather than the negative and redirect misbehavior into productive efforts.

2. Use the Three Rs for Mistakes

A great way to teach children that mistakes are wonderful opportunities to learn is to model this yourself by using the Three Rs of Recovery after you have made a mistake: 1) Recognize your mistake. 2) Reconcile. Be willing to say, "I'm sorry, I don't like the way I handled that." 3) Resolve. Focus on solutions rather than blame. It is much easier to take responsibility for a mistake when it is seen as a learning opportunity rather than something bad.

If we see mistakes as bad, we tend to feel inadequate and discouraged and may become defensive, evasive, judgmental or critical—of ourselves or others. On the other hand, when mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn, recognizing them will seem like an exciting venture. "I wonder what I will learn from this one." Self-forgiveness is an important element of the first R of Recovery.

A Story from Jane Nelsen: My signature example is the time I said to my then eight-year-old daughter, "Mary, you are a spoiled brat." Mary, who is very familiar with the Three Rs of Recovery, retorted,



DIMODIA

"Well, don't tell me later that you are sorry." In total reaction, I said, "You don't have to worry, because I'm not." Mary ran to her bedroom and slammed the door.

I soon reverted back to my rational brain, realized what I had done, and went to her

Puja (left) realizes that when she told her mother a lie this morning to save herself from getting in trouble, she was actually creating more trouble than the incident itself caused. After her parents guided her through the three Rs for recovering from her falsehood, Puja is confident that she will not make that mistake again!

room to apologize. She was still angry and was not ready for an apology. She had a copy of *Positive Discipline* and was busy scribbling "phony" in the column.

I left the room. I knew I had made a huge mistake. In about five minutes Mary came to me, timidly put her arms around me and said, "I'm sorry, Mama." I said, "Honey, I'm sorry, too. In fact, when I called you a spoiled brat, I was being one. I was upset at you for losing control of your behavior, but I had lost control of my own behavior. I am so sorry." Mary said, "That's okay, I was acting like a brat." I said, "Well, I can see what I did to provoke you to act that way." Mary said, "Well, I can see what I did."

personal emotions and to use that understanding to develop self-discipline and self-control.

5. Strong interpersonal skills: the ability to work with others and develop friendships through communicating, cooperating, negotiating, sharing, empathizing and listening.
6. Strong systemic skills: the ability to respond to the limits and consequences of everyday life with responsibility, adaptability, flexibility and integrity.
7. Strong judgmental skills: the ability to use wisdom and to evaluate situations according to appropriate values.

Four Steps for Winning Cooperation

Children feel encouraged when they think you understand their point of view. Once they feel understood, they are more willing to listen and to work on a solution to the problem. Using the following Four Steps for Winning Cooperation is a great way to create a connection before seeking to solve a behavioral problem.

1. Express understanding for the child's feelings. Be sure to check with him to see if you are right.
2. Show empathy without condoning his behavior. A nice touch here is to share times when you have felt or acted similarly.
3. Share your feelings and perceptions.
4. Invite the child to focus on a solution. Ask if he has any ideas on what to do in the future to avoid the problem. If he doesn't, offer some suggestions and seek his agreement.

An attitude of friendliness, caring and respect is essential to these steps. Your decision to create a connection will be enough to create positive feelings in you. After the first two steps, the child will be won over. He will now be ready to hear you when you use the third step (even if you may have expressed your feelings many times before

without being heard). The fourth step is likely to be effective now that you have created an atmosphere of respect.

SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA: "In a home I once visited, the host had two sons. He told them, 'Swamiji is here. Ask him whatever you want to ask or know.' The boys replied, 'We don't have any questions.' After breakfast I went to them and asked, 'What is your hobby?' 'We like to play baseball,' was the reply. I said, 'Please teach me about baseball.' Immediately they became enthusiastic about educating me on the game. They showed me some pictures and a video. Gradually they began asking me all about religion and culture." This shows that if you take an interest in a child's interests, slowly a rapport will build.

A Misbehaving Child Is a Discouraged Child

Sometimes it is difficult for us to remember that misbehaving children are speaking to us in code—that they are trying to tell us they want to belong when their behavior inspires frustration rather than love and caring. Some experts believe we will reinforce the behavior if we respond positively to a child who is misbehaving. If, however, we understand that a misbehaving child is a discouraged child, it is obvious that the best way to remove the motivation for misbehavior is to find a positive way to help the child feel belonging and significance.

Accepting this concept intellectually is one thing, but it is quite another to put it into practice for three reasons: 1) Most adults do not feel like being positive when a child is misbehaving. 2) Most adults don't fully understand how their own misbehavior can invite misbehavior from children and therefore are reluctant to accept responsibility for their part of the show. Awareness without blame can create a huge step in resolving conflict. 3) The rare adult who is able to respond to misbehavior with positive encouragement will often be rejected by the child. This is because children (like most of us) are not



always receptive to encouragement when they need it the most. They are too emotionally upset to accept it. The solution: wait for a cooling-off period and try again with encouragement.

The child who needs love the most is often the child who acts the most unlovable. Understanding the four mistaken goals of behavior helps adults remember what children are really saying with their misbehavior: "I just want to belong." It also helps us know what to do to resolve the problem in ways that are encouraging while teaching children life skills.

Think of the misbehavior as a code and ask yourself, "What is she really trying to tell me?" The child is not consciously aware of her coded message, but will feel deeply understood when you deal with her hidden belief instead of reacting to the behavior. You will feel differently if you remember that behind the misbehavior is a child who just wants to belong and is confused or unskilled

MOMENTS THAT CONNECT, LESSONS THAT LAST

3. Spend Time with Your Children

One important way to help children feel encouraged is to spend special time being with them. Have fun! One primary opportunity for cultivating closeness: when tucking children into bed, ask them to share with you their saddest time during the day and their happiest time during the day. Then you share with them. You will be surprised what you learn.

A Story from Amala Katir: Sita didn't realize how important one Positive Discipline tool had become until one night when she tucked her two girls into bed and walked out. One daughter, Ravindra, shouted, "Mom! You forgot to ask what was the saddest thing that happened today and what was the happiest thing." Not only had their previous endless crying and getting out of bed repeatedly stopped, but asking these questions every night had opened a wonderful new world of communication and bonding.

Scheduled Time: One of the most encouraging things parents can do for their children is to spend regular, scheduled special

time with them. You may already spend lots of time with your children. However, there is a difference between "have to time," "casual time," and "scheduled time."

There are several reasons why scheduled time is so encouraging:

1) Children feel a sense of connection when they can count on scheduled time with you. They feel that they are important to you. This decreases their need to misbehave as a mistaken way to find belonging and significance.

2) Scheduled special sharing is a reminder to you about why you had children in the first place—to enjoy them.

3) When you are busy and your children want your attention, it is easier for them to accept that you don't have time when you say, "Honey, I can't right now, but I sure am looking forward to our special time at 4:30."

Plan the special time with your children. Up to age 6, it can be daily. From 6 to 12, it can be more occasional, even weekly. Brainstorm ahead of time a list of things you would like to do together then.



A father in Mumbai creates a rangoli design with his daughter on Dipavali. By having fun with her, he builds a relationship of trust, affection and cooperation.

4. Take Time for Training

The idea of setting aside time for training children is not as obvious as it may sound. Too often, adults expect children to accomplish tasks for which there has not been adequate training. This is more typical in homes than in schools. Parents may expect children to clean their rooms without having ever been shown how. Children go into their messy rooms and feel overwhelmed. It helps if a parent says, "Put your clean clothes in your drawers and your dirty clothes in the hamper and then I'll let you know what is next." Next they could put their toys on the shelves or in toy boxes. To make it more fun, suggest all toys with wheels first, then toys with body parts, then toys that are animals, etc. Before long, the child has internalized the idea and learns what is expected.

There is often a great communication gap. When Dad tells his daughter to clean up the garage, each may have very different ideas of what this means. Taking time for specific training can eliminate misunderstanding. Taking time for training

means being specific about your terms and expectations.

Even when you do provide training, remember that children will seldom do things as well as you would like. Improvement is a lifelong process. Remember, too, the things you want them to do may not be a high priority for them until they become adults with children of their own to guide. We all do better at things that have a high priority in our lives. Even though cleanliness and good manners may not be important for children, they still need to learn these qualities. Adults do, however, need to remember that kids are kids.

A Story from Jane: A father of eight children complained that his son slammed the door every time he left the house. He admitted he was ready to slap the boy. The group suggested that he take his son over to the door and show him how to close it carefully—run through it a couple of times, actually train him how to close a door without slamming it. He came back to class the next week amazed—"It worked!"



This girl was acting out in the family, refusing to follow even the simple rules and distancing herself from her mom and dad. They tried everything, from time-outs to yelling, but nothing worked. So they changed the approach and stopped correcting her so often. Instead they started a program of training her, with the family chores, even how to ride her new bike. It worked! She felt competent and cared for.

about how to accomplish this goal in a socially useful way. Look closely to see if your words and actions are causing the child to believe she doesn't belong or have significance.

The following chart shows the four mistaken goals and corresponding beliefs that motivate misbehavior.

A CHILD'S MISTAKEN GOAL	CORRESPONDING ERRONEOUS BELIEF
Undue Attention	"I belong only when I have your attention."
Misguided Power	"I belong only when I'm the boss, or at least when I don't let you boss me."
Revenge	"I don't belong, but at least I can hurt back."
Assumed Inadequacy	"It is impossible to belong. I give up."

Undue Attention: Everyone wants attention. There is nothing wrong with that. The problem occurs when a child wants excessive attention. In other words, she seeks belonging in annoying ways rather than useful ways. The behavior is annoying because it comes from the child's mistaken belief of the moment: "I belong only when I am the center of attention." This belief adds a sense of urgency and persistence to the behavior that others find annoying. It can be very encouraging to children seeking undue attention to redirect them to get attention in contributing ways, such as helping you with a task.

Misguided Power: Everyone wants power. Power is not a bad thing; it depends on how it is used. When children have the mistaken belief that they belong only when they are the boss, their use

of power looks like misbehavior. When they operate from the mistaken goal of misguided power, they are not using their power in useful ways and need redirection to use it in socially useful ways. A power-hungry child can be shown how to lead others instead of dominating them.

Revenge: It seems to be human nature to strike back when we feel hurt. This is why revenge cycles are so common. It is ironic that adults want children to control their behavior when adults have difficulty controlling their own behavior. Controlling your own behavior is very important to break the revenge cycle. When you are feeling hurt, you can avoid striking back. Instead, validate the child's feelings.

Assumed Inadequacy: The child who operates from the mistaken idea of assumed inadequacy (because of a mistaken belief about her capabilities) may not cause you many problems during the day, but may haunt you at night when you have time to think about how she seems to have given up. Unlike the child who says, "I can't," just to get you to pay attention, the child operating from assumed inadequacy really believes she can't. You need to take time to show her a small step. Don't do all the steps. Having too much done for her could be what gave her the impression that she is inadequate. "I'll show you how to tie one shoe, and then you



Want kids to behave? Nothing works like sharing. Even the simple task of making sandwiches together creates close ties and gives young ones a sense of importance and belonging. This prevents misbehavior caused by discouragement.

can show me what you have learned and let me know if you need more help."

Clues for Identifying Mistaken Goals

There are two clues adults can use to help identify the goal. Clue number one is to examine your emotional reaction. Ask yourself, "Underneath my anger or frustration, am I feeling annoyed, threatened, disappointed or inadequate?" If the child's mistaken goal is **undue attention**, you will feel irritation, worry, guilt or annoyance. If it is **misguided power**, you will feel threatened, challenged, provoked or defeated. If revenge is the goal, you will feel hurt, disappointed, disbelieving or disgusted. When the goal is **assumed inadequacy**, you will feel inadequate, hopeless or helpless, asking yourself, "How can I possibly reach and inspire this child?" Practice observing your feelings and you will catch on to how this works. Many parents and teachers have reported that they keep a copy of the Positive Discipline Mistaken Goal Chart on their desk or refrigerator as a useful resource. It helps them remember the basis for most misbehavior, and to be more effective in helping their children during times of stress.

Clue number two is to observe the child's response when you use conventional methods to cope with the behavior. Here is a guide: **Undue Attention:** The child stops for a while, but soon resumes the same (or some other) behavior to get your attention.

LOVE GIVEN FREELY, CONFIDENCE GROWS NATURALLY

5. Give a Hug

In many cases adults can help children change their behavior when they stop dealing with the misbehavior and deal with the underlying cause: discouragement.

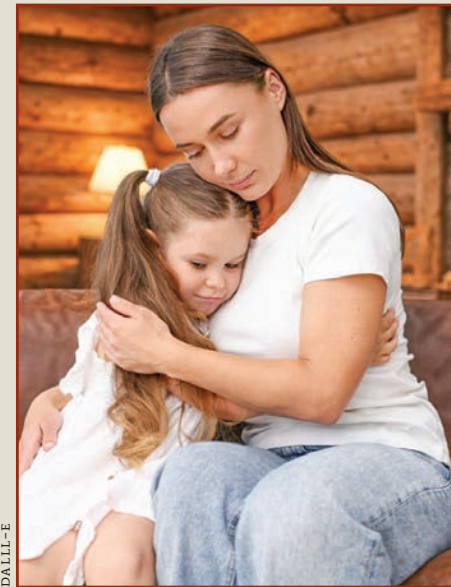
Encouragement is providing opportunities for a child to develop the perceptions, "I'm capable, I can contribute, and I can influence what happens to me or how I respond." Encouragement is teaching children the life skills and social responsibility they need to be successful in life and relationships. Such support can be as simple as giving them a hug to help them feel better and thus do better.

A Story from Jane: A young father was frustrated and perplexed about the frequent temper tantrums of his four-year-old son. Scolding or punishing only increased the tantrums. The father learned in his parenting class that a misbehaving child is a discouraged child, and that encouragement is the best way to deal with misbehavior. The idea seemed backward to him—sort of like rewarding unruliness. Still, he was intrigued with the idea that children do better when

they feel better. He decided to test the theory.

The next time his son started a tantrum, the father got down on one knee and shouted above the racket, "I need a hug." His son paused and asked through his sobs, "What?" The father shouted again, "I need a hug." His son stopped sobbing long enough to ask incredulously, "Now?!" The father said, "Yes, now." The son seemed totally bewildered, but he stopped his temper tantrum and said somewhat begrudgingly, "Okay." Then he stiffly gave his father a hug. Soon the stiffness disappeared and they melted into each other's arms. After a few moments the father said, "Thanks, I needed that." His son said, with a small tremor on his lips, "So did I."

Remember timing. Sometimes hugs don't work because the child is too upset to give or receive a hug or any kind of encouragement. You can still try. If the child is unwilling, you can say, "I sure would like a hug whenever you are ready," and then leave the area. Parents report that when they try this, the child usually comes after them right away wanting a hug.



Jennifer was having trouble at the cabin the family rented for a summer weekend. She was afraid of the unfamiliar surroundings and could not sleep. Mom knew intuitively that such fears dissolve with a loving word and a hug, and took the time to hold Jennifer close and assure her she was safe.

6. Share Encouragement Freely

Use encouragement to help children develop a sense of belonging, security, love and acceptance. They misbehave because they don't feel this belonging. Celebrate each step in the direction of improvement (rather than focusing on mistakes). Give positive feedback at every opportunity. Communication is important. Don't assume the child knows you love and care about him or that you are pleased when he does something right. You need to express these feelings.

A Story from Kavita: Priya was working hard one night studying for her exams. Actually, she had been working hard every day and night for the last year and she was completely exhausted. It seemed as though her mind couldn't retain one more word! At the age of seventeen, she knew that her parents loved her—"Well, at least until the exam," she thought to herself. Mom and Dad wanted her to be in the top ten in her class, so she would get into the best university. They told her it was for her own good, for her future, but the pressure of it all made her

feel that she would lose everything if she didn't come out with the perfect score. If she didn't, would her parents still beam when they looked at her? Probably not. "I have to earn their love, or I will lose it," she said to herself as she reopened her English book.

Hours later, she was awakened with a soft touch. She found herself face down on her book. She must have fallen asleep. Confused, she looked up to see both her parents standing by her side. Her father gathered her into his arms as if she were five again and sat on her bed, her mother joining. She felt so safe. In gentle voices her parents reassured her that they would always be her refuge. She was trying her best, and no matter what the outcome of the exam, they would support and help her. Tears rolled down Priya's eyes and she felt more determined than ever, feeling a new strength surging through her. Even young adults need encouragement to face life's challenges.



Basanti had the habit of putting her schoolwork off until the last minute. One day her parents took her out for a milkshake, and had her look around at the people and consider their many walks of life. They explained that, through her schooling, she has the power to open many doors for her future. Since then, with the strong support of her family, she spends long hours studying—knowing that failure is okay, but not trying is unacceptable.



Misguided Power: The child continues misbehaving and may verbally defy or passively resist your request to stop. This can easily escalate to a power struggle between you and the child. **Revenge:** The child retaliates by doing something destructive or saying something hurtful. This may escalate to a revenge cycle between you and the child. **Assumed Inadequacy:** The child usually is passive, hoping you will soon give up and leave him alone. Sometimes this child will act out (such as being the class clown to cover up feelings of inadequacy in academics, sports, etc.).

These two clues help parents and teachers break the code of what children are really saying with their behavior. Even when we understand the motive, it may not be easy to respond wisely. When we encounter a child who is misbehaving, it is much easier (and normal) to react from our secondary feelings of anger and frustration than it is to stop and wonder: "What is this child trying to tell me?" In my book, we also explain a technique of asking strategic questions of the child to determine the hidden motives of her behavior. One further complexity is that a child may be motivated by more than one mistaken goal at a time!

Effective Intervention

Once you know the mistaken goal (and the belief behind it), you can choose an effective strategy to create a connection with children and help them achieve their true goal of belonging and significance. Here are some basic remedies.

WHEN THE GOAL IS UNDUE ATTENTION

1) Redirect the child into contributing behavior. 2) Do the unexpected. A big hug is often effective. 3) Set up a schedule for special time with the child on a regular basis. 4) Smile in a knowing way that

communicates you are not "going to get hooked into this," and then say, "I'm looking forward to our special time at six o'clock." 5) Set up nonverbal signals with your child in advance: a hand over your heart to signal, "I love you," or a hand cupped to your ear to signal you are ready to listen when the whining stops. 6) Give reassurance and show faith. "I love you, and I know you can handle this yourself." 7) Ignore the behavior (but not the child) by placing your hand on his shoulder in a caring manner while continuing your activity. 8) During pleasant moments, take time for training and role play other ways to behave, such as using words instead of whining. 9) Verbalize love and caring.

WHEN THE GOAL IS MISGUIDED POWER

Withdraw from the power struggle to allow for a cooling-off period; then do one of the following: 1) Admit you can't make the child do anything and ask her for help in finding a solution that works for both of you. 2) Use the four steps for winning cooperation. 3) Follow up with a one-to-one problem-solving session. 4) Redirect the child to use power constructively. 5) Get the child involved in finding solutions. 6) Decide what you will do, not what you will try to make the child do. Example: "I will pull over to the side of the road until you two stop fighting." It is important that such actions be done with kindness as well as firmness. It is especially effective to keep quiet

.....
It's natural for siblings to compete, and even to fight, as these brothers compete for a digital device. One way to defuse battles is to restrain your own emotions, and not put down one child in front of the other or blame either of them. Instead, send each to a favorite place for some alone time. Soon they will get the idea that fighting in this family is not appropriate.



while following through—avoid reminders, threats and lectures. 7) Set up a schedule for spending special time with the child. 8) Get children involved in creating routines and then let the routines be the boss. 9) Offer limited choices. 10) Invite the child to put the problem on the family meeting agenda. 11) Verbalize love and caring.

WHEN THE GOAL IS REVENGE

Remember that children cover up hurt feelings, which make them feel powerless, by seeking revenge, which gives them a sense of control. Effective remedies include the following: 1) Withdraw from the revenge cycle by avoiding retaliation. 2) Make a guess about what has hurt the child and show empathy. Validate the hurt feelings. 3) Use reflective listening. Get into the child's world by reflecting back what you are hearing, "You sound very hurt." Reflective listening can include curiosity questions, "Can you tell me more? Then what happened? How did that make you feel?" The goal is to avoid sharing your point of view and to understand the child's point of view. 4) Use the Three Rs of Recovery if you caused the hurt. 5) Use the four steps for winning cooperation. 6) After a cooling-off period, engage the child in one-to-one

CLEAR ROUTINES, CONFIDENT SOLUTIONS

7. Establish Routine Charts

The more children do for themselves, the more capable and encouraged they feel. One of the best ways to avoid bedtime hassles and morning hassles is to get children involved in creating routine charts. Start by having your child make a list of all the things she needs to do before going to bed. The list might include: pick up toys, snack, bath, jammies, brush teeth, choose clothes for the next morning, bedtime story and hugs. Copy (or when children are old enough let them copy) all the items onto a chart. Then hang the chart on a wall where she can reach it. Let the routine chart be the boss. Instead of telling your child what to do, ask, "What is next on your routine chart?" Often, she will tell you without your asking.

Remember, the goal is to help children feel capable and encouraged. A nice fringe benefit is that you will be able to stop nagging and will experience more peaceful bedtimes and mornings.

A Story from Kavita: Aruna, an only child, was always around grown-ups, so she thought she was all grown up, too. When it

was time to get ready for bed, she always insisted on staying up like Mom and Dad. The six-year-old would hold on to the sofa and scream until she got her way. As a result, she had difficulty waking up in the morning for school and sometimes even fell asleep at her desk. All this left her moody and irritable.

One day Mom read about routine charts and their potential to make children happier and healthier. When Aruna came home from school the next day, Mom had big white paper with color pens, glitter and cutouts all over the kitchen table. Of course, Aruna wanted to help! Before long, to her own amazement, Mom had created a fun-looking bedtime chart! She couldn't wait to start putting gold stars in the squares.

Mom told her that when the small hand



Routine charts can be simple to-do lists or elaborate calendars that include family chores, outings, grandma visits and more. They give structure that makes young ones feel competent and independent.

on the clock reached the 8, she could start following the chart. It was so much fun that she actually looked forward to getting ready for bed. By the time the newness wore off and she was no longer impressed by the chart, she had developed a strong routine and bedtime was no longer a hassle.

8. Focus on Solutions

Get children involved in finding solutions to the cause of their misbehavior or mistake that are 1) related, 2) respectful, 3) reasonable and 4) helpful (the "three Rs and an H").

Making amends is a solution that is encouraging when used in a non-punitive manner, because children experience the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and correct any resulting problems. Making amends is encouraging because children learn they can be responsible and accountable for their behavior without fear of blame, shame and pain.

It is sad that some adults think it is more important for children to feel blame, shame and pain for what they have done than to make amends and experience encouragement that will motivate them to stop misbehaving. It is important to note that children do not get away with misbehavior when they are encouraged to make amends. They learn to be accountable, while keeping their dignity and respect intact.

For example, when your daughter bops

a baseball through the garage window and together you decide that the solution is to fix the window (with materials purchased with her allowance), you have arrived at a solution that is related, respectful, reasonable and helpful. So long as you stay out of a blaming mode and see the mistake as an opportunity to learn, you have practiced problem-solving skills and respect with your child, and you have enjoyed some quality time together. When focusing on solutions, one life skill that is often needed is calling for a cooling-off period (see strategy 9).

A Story from Jane: Ravindra, the custodian in an elementary school, caught five students defacing classroom doors. He spoke to them respectfully and together they decided they would make amends by helping him repaint the doors. He was so understanding that he inspired the boys to take pride in their work and to discourage other children from vandalizing. He had successfully used three Positive Discipline tools: 1) focusing on solutions, 2) creating a connection before correction and 3) redirecting the misbehavior.



After finding a way for Anjali to participate in the daily puja, the Gowda family was amazed to witness an immediate change in her demeanor. Being the middle child, she needs a little extra responsibility to feel that she is an important member of the family.

problem solving. 7) Show you care and give encouragement. 8) Set up a schedule for special time with the child. 9) Verbalize love and caring.

WHEN THE GOAL IS ASSUMED INADEQUACY

Remember that the child is not inadequate, but will continue to act inadequate until she gives up her belief that she is. Here are some remedies. 1) Take time for training, making the steps as basic as necessary for the child to experience success. Demonstrate a small step that the child can duplicate. "I will draw half the circle, and you draw the other half." 2) Arrange for small successes. Find out anything the child can do well, and give her many opportunities to share her expertise. 3) Acknowledge any positive attempt, no matter how small. 4) Eliminate all expectations of perfection. 5) Focus on the child's assets. 6) Do not give up. 7) Spend regular, special time with the child. 8) Verbalize love and caring.

Teach and Model Mutual Respect

Mutual respect incorporates attitudes of: 1) faith in the abilities of yourself and others; 2) interest in the point of view of others as well as your own; and 3) willingness to take responsibility and ownership for your own contribution to the problem. The best way to teach these attitudes to children is by modeling them yourself.

TARA KATIR: "We cannot teach Positive Discipline without establishing rapport. Developing rapport means spending time doing things together and talking with your children at their level about things they want to talk about. Often this can be achieved by just being together silently, or simply feeling the good bond of parent and child while enjoying an activity. Rapport can easily be broken. Speaking sharply can break it. Then it needs to be repaired."

What We Do Is Never as Important as How We Do It

The feeling and attitude behind what we do will determine the "how." The feeling behind words is often most evident in our tone of voice.

One day I came home from a trip and was welcomed by a sink full of dirty dishes. I felt discouraged and angry and started scolding and criticizing, "We have agreed that everyone will put their dishes in the dishwasher. How come no one keeps their agreements when I'm not around?"

I looked for someone to blame, but everyone claimed, "I didn't do it." From a negative feeling I said, "Okay, we have to have a family meeting and decide what to do about this." Can you imagine the outcome if we had tried to have a meeting based on my feelings of blame and criticism? We would not have found the kind of effective solution that comes from an atmosphere of love and respect. My attacking attitude would have inspired defensiveness and counterattacks instead of harmony and solutions. I realized what I was doing and immediately changed directions. I could see that my negative attitude would not produce the results I wanted—to say nothing of how miserable it made me feel at the time. As soon as I changed my attitude, my feelings changed and I had immediate inspiration about how to get positive results. I said, "Let's go out for pizza. Later we will have a family meeting to look for solutions instead of blame."

Based on those feelings, we had a successful meeting. We laughingly agreed that it must have been a phantom who left the dishes in the sink. When we stopped looking for blame and concentrated on solutions, Mark and Mary proposed that we all be assigned two days a week to take care of the phantom's dirty dishes. As you might guess, fewer dishes were left in the sink after this friendly discussion.

BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI: Kids can learn from parents that it is through taking a humble attitude, rather than a dominant



position, that conflicts are resolved smoothly and easily. Mastery of resolving differences keeps our young one's lives sublime and their subconscious minds free of the disturbances caused by memories of unresolved disagreements.

Give Children the Benefit of the Doubt

Every child wants to succeed. Every child wants to have good relationships with others. Every child wants to feel a sense of connection, belonging and significance. When we remember this, we will give misbehaving children the benefit of the doubt. Instead of assuming they want to be difficult, we will assume they want positive results and are simply confused about how to achieve them. They don't have the knowledge, the skills or the maturity to find belonging and significance in useful ways. It is our job to help them develop what they need. To be effective, our approach must be based on an attitude of, "I know you want to succeed. How can I help?"

DR. KRISHNA D. BHAT: "Parents should know the needs, aspirations, strengths and limitations of every child. Paramahansa Niranjanananda calls it the SWAN theory: Strengths, Weaknesses, Aspirations and Needs. Children should be properly molded by parents. They are highly suggestible, like malleable metal. They are very imitative and will copy our behavior,

.....
The values of Positive Discipline only work when a strong rapport has been created. There is no better way to build that foundation of closeness and trust than to be with your children. Knowing this, the Patels have taken their children to the park for the day, to picnic and be with the grandparents, but mostly just to have fun.

WHEN EMOTIONS SETTLE, LEARNING BEGINS

9. Cool-Off Before Solving a Problem

In coping with tough situations, proper timing will improve your effectiveness tenfold. It does not work to deal with a problem at the time of conflict. Emotions get in the way. Thus, it is important to understand and to teach children that, in most cases, a cooling-off period is necessary before seeking a solution. Since it is difficult to focus on solutions when we are upset and responding from our irrational brain, where the options are fight or flight, it is helpful to wait until we have calmed down and can access our rational brains. I call this positive time-out.

How do you teach children about cooling-off periods? By example and repetition. You (or the children) can go to a separate room and do something to make yourself feel better, and then work on the problem with mutual respect. "I think we are both too upset to discuss this now, but I would like to get together with you when we have had time to cool off." Another approach might be, "What would help you the most right now—to take some positive time-out, or to put this problem on the meeting agenda so we can get

some help from the whole family later?"

Have your children help you design a pleasant area (with cushions, books, music, stuffed animals) where they can go to calm down when they are upset. Remember that children do better when they feel better.

A Story from Kavita: "I can't believe what just happened!" Roshan's father stammered. "I can't even think straight, I'm so mad! You need to go upstairs. I need to calm down." Roshan, age 6, ran to his favorite time-out spot and hurled his body on the cushions. His father, fraught with anger, went into his study and shut the door, struggling to regain his composure. Both gradually felt better as, in their own worlds, they were able to calm their breaths and maybe punch a couple of cushions. After 15 minutes, young Roshan was quietly playing with his favorite toy car. Downstairs, his father had turned his attention to today's newspaper and was reading an article. When he saw the time, he walked up the stairs, tussled Roshan's hair and sat on the floor next to him, eye level. Now the time was right for solving the problem.



Stacey has been overcome with emotion from an incident at school. Mom knows this is not the time to sort out the problems that caused the upset, and arranges for her daughter to cool off in their agreed-upon quiet place.

10. Connection before Correction

Making a connection means creating a feeling of closeness and trust before using any of the many respectful and encouraging corrective methods suggested in the Positive Discipline books. Whenever possible, correction includes involving children in focusing on solutions instead of punishing them for mistakes. Effective connections are made when both child and adult feel belonging and significance—even though it is the adult who takes the first steps. Some of these steps to connection are: 1) Listen. Really listen. Stop doing whatever you are doing and give your child your full attention. 2) Validate your child's feelings. Don't we all feel connected when we feel understood? 3) Share your feelings when appropriate. Remember that children will listen to you AFTER they feel listened to. Children feel special when you respectfully share something about yourself. (Respectfully means no stories about "walking miles in the snow.")

It is important to understand that correction in the Positive Discipline way is

different from conventional correction. Positive Discipline correction respectfully involves children—whenever possible, doing things with them.

A Story from Kavita: Davishan, age 16, was a natural athlete. His parents enjoyed his enthusiasm and encouraged him to channel his energies into sports. The only problem was the level of competition. Davishan was starting to lose the enjoyment of striving by channeling all of his thoughts toward winning. He became distraught for days on end if he did not win.

Calling for a quiet time one afternoon, the father looked his son straight in the eyes with such love and respect that Davishan turned away. After some time, he asked the boy questions about competing and listened to every word the boy had to say. Davishan was afraid his father would stop him from competing. So, he was taken completely by surprise when he asked what Davishan thought they should do to improve his frame of mind when he lost a game. Davishan offered that he could work more on excelling



Kevin's mom has a correction to make, but is wise enough to first give him full love and attention, and to listen to her son's side before explaining why it's important not to speak with strangers. She earns his attention and is able to get her message across meaningfully.

and helping his teammates than on winning. Dad liked that, and added that they could work through it together. Only if that did not resolve the behavior problems would they need to consider alternatives.

which is one of the greatest risks of using corporal punishment.”

Freely Express Unconditional Love

Children need to know they are more important to us than anything they do. They need to know they are more important than their grades. They need to know they are more important than the material possessions in our lives. Jiva's mom made some mistakes before she remembered this vital point. When Jiva broke one of her prize antique vases, she was so heartbroken over it that she sat down and cried. Jiva felt awful about what he had done, but finally asked, "Mother, would you feel that bad if something happened to me?"

Children often don't know how important and loved they are. Sometimes parents and teachers focus so much on misbehavior that they lose sight of the child—and the child loses sight of himself. One mother asked her three-year-old, "Do you know I really love you?" The reply was, "Yes, I know you love me when I am good." A teenager replied to the same question, "I know you love me if I get good grades."

We often nag at our children to do better. We want them to be better because we love them and think they will be happier if they do what we think is good for them. They usually do not hear that we want them to do better for their sake. What they interpret is, "I can never do anything well enough. I can't live up to your expectations. You want me to be better for you, not for me."

Remember that children do better when they feel better. Nothing feels better than unconditional love. Most parents are not aware that they are being unloving when they use punishment. In fact, most parents use punishment in the name of love!

KAVITA: "When talking to children, it can help to get on the same eye level with the child. I found that this simple practice changed my communication with my young son. The hardest part is trying not

to break into a smile when I ask him to look into my eyes and he looks left and right trying to avoid my gaze. Once he makes eye contact, I have his full attention. Looking into your child's eyes brings the two of you closer and tunes you into how he or she is feeling in that moment."

Help Children Develop a Sense of Capability

All the concepts taught in Positive Discipline help children develop their sense of capability. Children will not acquire a sense of competence and responsibility if adults keep doing for them what they can and should do for themselves.

Put Positive Discipline to Work in Your Life

If you like the concepts presented in this brief introduction, I strongly urge you to read my *Positive Discipline* book, and then read it again. I guarantee that you will get at least ten times more from it in the second reading. You will see things you totally missed the first time. Once you understand the principles, your common sense and intuition will enable you to apply them in your own life. I know from personal experience, and from reports from hundreds of parents and teachers, that these concepts really work when used correctly.

Adults have a leadership responsibility to help children develop characteristics that will enable them to live happy, productive lives. It is our job to provide them with a good foundation that they can build upon. Teaching them self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation and problem-solving skills helps them establish an excellent foundation. When children exhibit these characteristics and skills, they feel a greater sense of belonging and significance, which gives rise to positive behavior.

Here is an inspiring testimony that Marianne McGinnis sent me

CURIOUS MINDS, CONFIDENT OUTCOMES

II. Ask Curiosity Questions

Too often adults tell children what happened, what caused it to happen, how the child should feel about it, what the child should learn from it, and what the child should do about it. It is much more respectful and encouraging when we ask what happened, what the child thinks caused it, how the child feels about it, what the child has learned, what ideas the child has to solve the problem, or how the child can use what she has learned in the future. This is the true meaning of *education*, which comes from the Latin word *educare*, which means "to draw forth." Too often, adults try to "stuff in," instead of draw forth, and then wonder why children don't learn.

One way to get the child engaged is to ask questions that arouse their curiosity. A few typical curiosity questions are:

- What were you trying to accomplish?
- How do you feel about what happened?
- What did you learn from this?
- How can you use what you learned in the future?
- What ideas do you have for solutions now?

A Story from Jane: One of my favorite examples is the time my daughter shared with me her intention to get drunk at a party. I gulped and said, "Tell me more. Why are you thinking of doing that?" She said, "Lots of kids do it and it looks like they are having fun." I stifled my temptation to lecture and asked, "What do your friends say about you now, knowing you don't drink?" She thought about this and said, "They are always telling me how much they admire me and how proud they are of me." I continued, "What will they think after you get drunk?" I could see her think before she offered, "I'll bet they'll be disappointed." I followed with, "How do you think you'll feel about yourself?" I could tell this question made her think a little deeper. She paused a little longer before saying, "I will probably feel like a loser." This was soon followed by, "You know, Mom, I don't need to get drunk. Thank you for taking the time to help me with this."



Asking the right questions about a sensitive issue can bring mother and daughter closer together. It is good to remember that a child's relationship with the parents can profoundly affect his or her decision-making patterns.

12. Prepare Kids for Success

If you plan to bring your child to the store, a movie, or on any outing, be sure to have a conversation beforehand about the needful behavior of the day. If children know beforehand, it gives you more freedom later to explain consequences and respect. Otherwise, they can simply and truthfully tell you they didn't know any better. Respecting our children creates respect in all aspects. For example, let them know that they can choose only one treat at the store and if they ask for a second treat, the first treat will be put back on the shelf. This limits argument in public places, which often creates frustration in the parent, leading to incidents that are embarrassing and hurtful to all involved.

Story: Every Sunday the Ramdoo family goes to the temple for Ganesha puja. Mr. and Mrs. Ramdoo always take a little time to tell Siven (age 7) and Purna (age 5) that the temple is a special place, and to remind them of the expected behaviors inside the temple walls. During their family meeting, they let the children write out a list of things that are OK to do and things that are not OK. Then they have

the children write down a list of things they could do during the puja that would help them to sit quietly. One Sunday, Purna decided to bring her favorite doll to hold, and Siven brought his favorite toy car. He learned in advance that he could not push the car on the floor but he *could* hold it in his lap and play with the tires. Because it was Chaturthi, Siven and Purna also decided to each make five drawings for Ganesha as a gift to Him on His special day.

The family agreed on certain hand signals (not threatening looks) to let the children know without words if their actions were appropriate or not. There were signals of encouragement that made their faces light up! And there was a gesture that warned them that if unacceptable behavior persisted there would be consequences. That was also agreed upon at the family meeting.

INTRODUCTION & STORY BY KAVITA MARDEMOTOO

The Teen Years

When children reach their teens, they naturally go through a major individuation process. They are exploring who they are, separate from their parents. This often translates into rebellion as they test parental values.

Peer pressure is extremely important to teenagers. Younger children are influenced by peer pressure, but adult approval is even more important to them. To teenagers, peer approval trumps adult approval.

Many parents and teenagers have drawn battle lines, which are intensified when parents are intent on controlling their teenagers. We are saddened by this, because we know it is absolutely impossible to control teenagers; it is too late. The more you try to control them, the more defiant and/or devious they get.

The best way to win the cooperation of teenagers is through mutual respect and equality in problem solving. Family meetings and class meetings teach social responsibility and get them involved in the decision-making process.

When treated with kindness, firmness, dignity, respect and lots of joint problem-solving, teenagers usually fall back on parental values in their twenties—and they will have learned more of the important life skills they need when they are no longer under the authority of adults.



Success is important, but it must be achieved in the right way. Forcing kids to achieve important goals is counter to Positive Discipline. Parents do better when they enlist their children's inspiration and do not foist their own goals on them. When children achieve on their own, success feels genuine, satisfying and freely earned.

after attending my two-day workshop "Teaching Parenting the Positive Discipline Way." "Your philosophy on living and parenting gives me more hope than anything else I have ever come across. I am truly inspired, and am already incorporating many of the tools—family meetings, remembering that mistakes are opportunities to learn, asking 'what' and 'how' curiosity questions, looking for solutions instead of blame, sharing encouraging messages ('I have faith in you' is my favorite) and always getting the message of love across. Not only are my boys responding with more love and helpful behavior, I can see how encouraged and inspired they are! I'm not shutting them down anymore." I called Marianne and asked her to share her success stories for a podcast. To hear her story, go to www.PositiveDiscipline.com, search "Marianne," second result.

If you find that Positive Discipline isn't working for you, check to see if something is missing or out of balance. For example, problem-solving may not be effective if adults or children do not understand that mistakes are opportunities to learn. Family or class meetings may not be effective until people have learned mutual respect and social responsibility. Too much kindness without firmness may become permissiveness, and too much firmness without kindness may become excessive strictness.

Sometimes we have to stop dealing with the misbehavior and heal the relationship first. Often the healing involves encouragement that removes the motivation for misbehavior without dealing directly with the misbehavior. Encouragement may not seem to work until adults understand the belief behind the child's behavior by recognizing the mistaken goals.

There is never just one way to solve a behavior challenge. In parent and teacher study groups, participants can brainstorm several possible suggestions based on the principles in the books. The parent or

teacher seeking help can then choose the most acceptable suggestion. You can also send questions to my blog, where I post my answers and advice on a vast array of issues. On-line classes in Positive Discipline are available, and my team offers telephone consultation as well.

Positive Discipline is not about perfection. It is helpful to have patience with ourselves and with our children as we work to change old habits. As our understanding of the underlying principles deepens, practical application becomes easier. Patience, humor and forgiveness enhance our learning process. Remember to see mistakes as opportunities to learn when you fall back into old habits. We have found that no matter how many times we react and forget to use the principles of Positive Discipline, we can always go back to the principles and clean up the messes we made while reacting. It is true, over and over again, that mistakes are wonderful opportunities to learn. Have compassion for yourself when you make mistakes—and learn from them. I have been learning from mistakes for over 40 years since I first wrote *Positive Discipline*. I love these principles because they are wonderful guidelines to help me get back on track every time I get lost.

I have presented many new concepts and skills here that will take practice for you to successfully apply to the special circumstances of your family. It can be confusing and discouraging to expect too much of yourself. Apply one method at a time and move ahead slowly, remembering to see mistakes as opportunities to learn. Many parents and teachers have found that even though their children don't become perfect, they enjoy them much more after applying these concepts and attitudes. That is my wish for you.

Dr. Jane Nelsen

The Challenge of Screen Addiction

In her newest book *Help! My Child Is Addicted to Screens—Yikes, So Am I!*, Jane Nelsen and Kelly Bartlett argue that the answer to children's digital overuse is neither harsh control nor helpless permissiveness, but a balanced middle path of wisdom, kindness and firmness. Screens are now woven into daily life, they note, so the goal is not total rejection of technology but learning how to use it wisely while protecting healthy child development and family relationships.

Their central message is that digital habits are best changed through connection before correction. Children are more likely to accept limits on screen use when they feel close to their parents through conversation, shared meals, one-on-one time, hugs, listening and regular family interaction. Even screen use itself can become a point of connection when parents sit with children, understand what they enjoy and engage without judgment.

The book stresses that parents must examine their own device habits, because



Wise use of digital devices has become a primary adjustment in families. Too often young ones, including young adults, spend more time in the virtual universe than in the real world developing important skills and relationships.

children learn more from example than from lectures. Families are encouraged to create routines, screen-free zones, device-free meals and bedtime boundaries, along with a thoughtful family media plan. The authors warn that excessive screen use can crowd out the slow-growing skills children most need: empathy, self-discipline, problem-solving, communication and real-world social confidence.

For Jane Nelsen, the deeper issue is not screens alone, but a child's sense of belonging. When children feel truly seen, valued and connected within the family, their need to seek fulfillment through screens naturally diminishes. From this foundation of security and significance, they are better able to develop self-restraint, make thoughtful choices and cultivate a healthier, more balanced relationship with the digital world.

GUIDED CHOICES, STRONGER FAMILIES

13. Try Limiting the Choices

One of the easiest and yet most powerful tools of Positive Discipline is "Limited Choices." You can actually guide your children through their younger years by letting them make choices for themselves, so that they build character and individuality, while still retaining parental control of the situation.

Try putting two children in a candy store and asking them to choose just one treat! They are overwhelmed by the options. Each watches to see who got the best or bigger treat, and it ends up being a competition, instead of a simple candy treat.

Now try it with "Limited Choices." Tell the children that each may choose two pieces each of two types of candy, one piece for themselves and the other for the sibling. You have let them choose their own, but you have reduced the choices from 50 to two, and you have avoided the competition—all in one sentence. They each end up with four pieces of the same candies.

This strategy can work for just about everything: "Would you like to ring the bell

or decorate with the flowers for this morning's puja?" "Would you prefer a glass of water or a glass of juice?" Avoid asking, "What would you like to wear?" "What would you like to drink?" Such questions invite conflict because the child may say something that you do not agree with.

Story: Before each family dinner or outing, Anuradha chose the appropriate outfit for her son and daughter. She would set out the clothes on the children's bed and inevitably face a storm of protest. One of them almost always ended up crying. One day Anuradha was choosing her own outfit for an important dinner. She asked her husband what he liked. He surprised her by picking out two outfits, then saying that she should make the final decision. She quickly picked her favorite and saw how easy he had made it for her. She realized in that moment that she was frustrating her children by not



Savanna's mom has learned an important lesson—that giving her daughter limited choices allows them both to benefit. Mom gets to set the limits that protect her daughter and Savanna gets to feel part of the decision.

respecting them enough to let them have a say in their choice of clothes. Soon after, while preparing to go to their cousin's house, she laid out three good choices for each child and left the room. No arguing, no tears!

TEXT BY KAVITA MARDEMOOTO

14. Hold Weekly Family Meetings

Having weekly family meetings is an important key to creating a loving, respectful atmosphere in the home while helping children develop self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation and problem-solving skills.

One of the activities is solving problems with cooperation and mutual respect. Solutions must be agreed upon by consensus. A majority vote in a family meeting would accentuate a family division. Convey an attitude of faith in your family that you can work together to find unanimous solutions that are related, respectful, reasonable and helpful.

Planning weekly family fun activities and other events is an important part of family meetings. Family members are more willing to cooperate when they have participated equally in planning events they will all enjoy. Also discuss chores at a family meeting so that children can help solve the problems of getting them done. They are more cooperative when they can voice their feelings and be part of the planning and choosing.

Choose a chairperson. Children love to be

the chairperson and can do a very good job after they reach the age of four or five. This job should rotate. The chairperson calls the meeting to order, starts the group sharing of compliments, begins the problem-solving sessions, and sends the "talking stick" around the circle, which gives everyone a turn to voice an opinion or make a suggestion.

The job of secretary should also rotate among members of the family who are able to write. The secretary keeps notes of problems discussed and decisions made. Family meetings should include a review of the next week's activities. This is especially important as the children grow older and become involved in many activities, such as babysitting, sports, dates, lessons and so on. Coordinating the calendar for car use and mutual convenience can be essential. Family meetings should not end without planning a family fun activity during the coming week.

End the meeting by doing something together as a family. You might want to play a game together, eat popcorn or take turns making and serving desserts. Do not watch TV unless there

is a program that the whole family looks forward to. If you do watch a program, be sure to end by turning off the TV and having a family discussion about what values (or lack thereof) were portrayed, and how this might apply in your lives.

A Story from Kavita: The Peruman family had four children, ages 2, 4, 10 and 12. Family meetings were often interrupted by two-year-old Vijay, who would scream at the top of his lungs and throw toys at the table. The other siblings rolled their eyes as Mother spent most of the meeting coping with him. Finally, Father asked what to do about Vijay. "Put him in his room!" "Let him cry!" came the responses. Mr. Peruman asked them to calm down and think about why Vijay was acting up. Little Anjali (age four) surprised them by saying, "He just wants to be like us." At that, the others sprang from their chairs, hugged their little brother, put cushions on a kitchen chair and placed him at the table. Enjoying his beaming smile, they gave him a pen and paper and told him to choose the next person to share while he took notes (scribbles). As the official co-chairperson at family meetings, Vijay fit in perfectly.



INTERVIEW

Sivam Yoga Is Her Calling

With Amma Thiyaneswar

BY ERICA BASSANI

IN THE SPRING OF 2024—WHILE IN TIRUVANNAMALAI, INDIA, conducting interviews with teachers and leaders for the Women Awakening Project—one night I went to sit and meditate at the feet of Mouna Swami, an Indian man who took a vow of silence around thirty years ago. In a large warehouse, sitting on a simple wooden bed, he spends the whole day in contemplation, his long dreadlocks touching the floor, a swarm of silent people coming and going. To my surprise, on that day a big celebration was happening. As I was finding my way through the crowd, I saw Mouna Swami standing next to an Indian woman. When he bowed to her, and then put a garland around her neck, I got excited. Immediately someone close to me confirmed, “That Amma is Mouna Swami’s guru.” I was so happy to have found a female guru! I couldn’t wait to meet her, so after the event I went directly to her ashram. In the following month, I went several times to interview her. She speaks Tamil, so her assistant translated into English. Her sweet gaze and smile were just melting me as I tried to find out more about her ashram’s practice of Sivam Yoga.

Amma, what is the Sivam Yoga tradition and its duration? Sivam Yoga lineage starts from Lord Siva. Siva preached it to Parvati, Parvati to Nandi, Nandi to Tirumular and Tirumular to other gurus who were following Sivam Yoga. It has not been written, but it is passed on from guru to guru only through oral communication. The time period is not predictable. It starts from Siva, when He preached it and from that time onwards it is continuing for the betterment of human beings.

Can you please share with us what is Siva in your experience? Is it supreme consciousness? Sivam is Yegam, which means “the unique one.” It’s formless and nameless, but we call it Siva. The place of Yegam is beyond the universe. It is the supreme power, the greatest power. We can’t see it with our physical eyes, because it is far beyond. In this world, we can see the formless one in the forms.

How did your spiritual journey begin? I was born in 1962 in Tirunelveli, a small village in the Tamil Nadu region. My father worked at a railway station, and my mother was managing the kids. Due to the proximity of our house to the train tracks, I wasn’t allowed to play outside and spent most of my time indoors. At that time, there were no televisions or newspapers, and I had limited knowledge of the world beyond my immediate surroundings. I was familiar only with my parents and Siva, the Divine. When my family acquired their first radio, a rare privilege, I was permitted to listen solely to devotional songs.

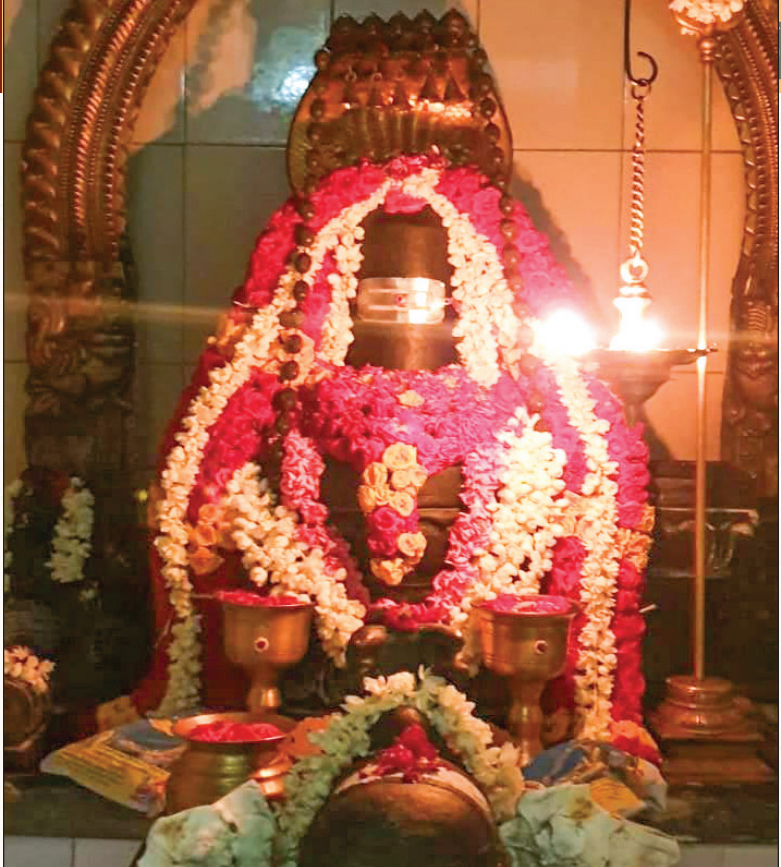


COURTESY THIYANESHWAR AMMA ASHRAM

In the absence of external distractions, I found myself deeply absorbed in thoughts about God. At the age of six, I attended a temple festival with my grandfather. Witnessing a man in trance during the festival, I got profoundly curious and asked my grandfather why I couldn’t also dance like that man. He explained to me that the Goddess of the temple was entering the man’s body. So, I expressed my desire to dance like him and see God, and my grandfather replied, “When and if God allows, I’ll show you.” This is how it all began.

How is it for a woman here in India to be a guru in this tradition, and what was the situation of women as you were growing up? In all the time periods, women gurus are there, but they do face opposition. My mother had a high education level; she could read and write and that was considered to be more than enough. There were many restrictions for women as I was growing up. Giving women more freedom was felt as a threat that could break cultural norms. Women couldn’t smile. Just as the tobacco leaf that loses its fragrance if it opens, likewise, a woman that smiled in public would lose her qualities. Women couldn’t stand at the door of the house. It was customary at five in the afternoon to light a lamp in the house. Once the lamp was lit, she could no longer go out. If she had to, she could only do so accompanied by members of the family. These were the limits in which a woman was living back then.

How did your family respond to your becoming a guru at an early age? For everything, God is the only reason. I received guru diksha from my grandfather, so he already knew about my whole life journey in this world, and my family was made aware of it. He knew I would



COURTESY THIYANESHWAR AMMA ASHRAM



COURTESY THIYANESHWAR AMMA ASHRAM

get married and have children. After three years of marriage, my husband got Siva diksha, and he became a sannyasin and renounced the lay life. So, from that moment onwards my spiritual path became clearer. But for sure, a woman can have a family and be perfectly fulfilled spiritually, and you can become a guru even if you are living the marital life. You can realize Siva by renouncing the world or by staying and living an ordinary life in it.

How did you juggle motherly responsibilities on one side and your profound relationship with Siva on the other? It’s like riding two horses at the same time. If I learned it, it means it is possible for everybody, but practice is needed. Think of a person



Sadhana and seva: (clockwise from opposite page) Amma Thiyaneswar at her ashram; the ashram’s Dyaneshwar Sivalingam; Amma personally distributes basic necessities to sadhus in Tiruvannamalai town

who can walk on a rope with a weight on his head. It’s a great capacity of balance that doesn’t develop overnight. Likewise, people that are leading an ordinary life should worship God whenever they have time, as well as while doing their duties, their work. Take a woman in a village who is walking a goat with a rope in one hand, her son in the other hand and a pot full of water on her head. And, she is also talking with the friend who’s walking along with her. How is it possible for her to do all of these things at the same time? You see these things when you walk around in the villages. It’s practice. Similarly, we have to think about God all the time.

Tiruvannamalai is known for the sacred mount Arunachala and for the ashram of Ramana Maharshi. The silence in this place is very tangible, incredibly powerful and beyond external noises. What is your relationship with silence?

Peace, silence, is the common base of all spiritual practice and has to be found within. If you find that peace, you can meditate also in the marketplace. When you are in front of the ocean you can hear the sound of the waves, sometimes it is very loud. And this is the daily life we live. But you know that if only you immerse in the ocean, you can find a silence that is always there. And that is the spiritual practice. Since time immemorial people have been searching for the creator of this world. Even if the creator exists in all the creatures, their search is still continuing. Where peace exists, there is God. Wherever there is love, wherever there is dharma, God is there. But to abide in that, discipline and morality are necessary. The searching is not enough. It has to become a way of living. Then only, the realization can happen. We don’t need to search for God here and there, but have absolute faith in His existence, so we can walk a path to reach Him. And one day the consciousness will let It shine through. If we have love and mercy, and if grace allows, we will realize It.

What about the many manifestations of that infinite one? How do we reconcile in our hearts the existence of that Supreme Reality and the smaller manifestations of it available to our eyes and senses? Many years ago, during a satsang, someone asked me: “You worship Arunachala (Annamalaiyar), and you keep a Sivalingam at your home, calling it Dyaneshwar. If

everything is one, why are you worshipping the great Annamalaiyar as well as the small Dyaneshwar?” I really didn’t know what to say. The universe suggested to me: simply say that if Annamalaiyar is a laddu (a typical south Indian sweet ball), then Dyaneshwar is a bhundi (a piece of laddu). Everybody was happy with that answer.

The Author: Erica Bassani is a copywriter, author and spiritual seeker since her early twenties. She’s combined her highest passion with her deepest love by founding the Women Awakening Project (www.womenawakeningproject.com), a space to gather interviews with female masters of all spiritual traditions.